

Crook County Board of County Commissioners Minutes of March 11, 2026, Work Session

Be It Remembered that the Crook County Board of County Commissioners met in a Work Session on March 11, 2026, at 9:00 AM in the Administration Conference Room, located at 203 NE Court Street, Prineville, OR 97754.

Work Session Agenda

Board Members Present: Seth Crawford, Susan Hermreck, Brian Barney

Board Members Absent:

Others Present in Person or Via Zoom: County Manager Will Van Vactor; Executive Assistant Breyanna Cupp; County Counsel Eric Blaine; County Clerk Cheryl Seely; HR Director Meghan McKee; Finance Director Christina Haron; Legal Assistant Alex Solterbeck; Systems Engineer Chelsea Watson; Administrative Division Manager Stephanie Wilson; Lieutenant Andrew Rasmussen; Road Superintendent Brad Haynes; Public Health Modernization Manager Stephanie O'Neal; Librarian Team Lead Kim Bales; Librarian Renee Parrott; Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb; Landfill Director Jacquie Davis; Landfill Manager Aaron Reinhart; Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly; Administrative Assistant Mona Glade; Natural Resources Coordinator Tim Deboodt Community Health Worker Shelby Fisher; Amber Heiberger; Jessica Barnes; Mike Ervin; Julie Thompson; John Heylin; Bertha; Laura; and members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 09:00 AM.

Public Comment

None

Discussion

1. Treasurer's Report for February 2026

Requester:

Christina Haron, Crook County Finance Director

Details: Finance Director Christina Haron attended the Work Session and presented the February Treasury Report, reviewing bank and investment account balances and noting that minor differences between bank balances and the general ledger were due to deposits in transit, outstanding checks, and tax turnover timing. Cash balances remained steady from January to February, with no unallocated cash across accounts. Christina also provided an overview of the county's investments, noting they are held to maturity in accordance with the county's investment policy, resulting in lower risk and predictable returns. She reported a favorable difference between the book and market value of investments and confirmed there was no outstanding warrant indebtedness as of the end of February. During the discussion, Christina explained that certain tax turnover accounts, such as the Flat Rock Road District, will be consolidated into a single unsegregated tax account following implementation of the new ERP system. She also noted that February tax collections were higher than typical, with

more taxpayers paying their taxes in full rather than using installment payments.

2. Moderate-Income Revolving Loan Program

Requester:

Eric Klann, Divergent Engineering Services

Presenter(s):

Eric Klann, Divergent Engineering Services

Jason Carr, Carr Strategies

Details: Eric Klann and Jason Carr attended the Work Session to present a proposal for a middle-income housing development in Prineville, specifically designed to address the "squeezed" segment of the workforce. Klann, a local engineer, highlighted that while Crook County now boasts the second-highest average wage in Oregon, this economic growth has driven average home prices above \$450,000, effectively pricing out essential community members like teachers, police officers, and firefighters. To bridge this gap, the project utilizes the Moderate Income Revolving Loan Program, a state-funded initiative established to provide zero-interest loans for "horizontal" infrastructure costs, such as water, sewer, power, and streets. By offsetting these significant upfront expenses, the developer can offer homes at lower price points to households earning 120% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI), which currently equates to approximately \$76,000 for a single person.

The financial structure of the program involves the County adopting an ordinance to act as a pass-through for state funds. The loan is repaid over a 10-year period using the property tax revenue generated by the newly built homes. While the fire department's tax revenue is protected and paid out normally to ensure it can meet the increased demand for service, other taxing districts—including the school district and law enforcement—would forgo their portion of the new tax revenue for a decade to facilitate the loan repayment. Eric emphasized that this is a low-risk arrangement for the County, as the state holds a lien against the developer's land to secure the funds. Unlike traditional low-income housing, this program avoids "income traps"; once a qualified buyer purchases a home, they are free to increase their earnings without penalty. However, if they choose to sell within the first 10 years, they must sell to another buyer who meets the 120% AMI requirement. After the 10-year term, all restrictions expire, and the homes remain a permanent part of the local tax base.

The proposed development, located in the Barnes Butte area near the elementary school, consists of 108 homes designed with "rear-load" garages via alleys to maintain high aesthetic standards and a walkable community feel. The plan also includes a commercial node for local amenities like coffee shops. During the discussion, concerns were raised regarding how to ensure these homes benefit local residents rather than commuters from neighboring cities like Bend or Redmond. Eric and Jason explained that the state allows the County, as the sponsor, to implement a "preference point" system. This system would allow the County to prioritize applicants who are current

public employees, first responders, or long-term residents. Although some board members questioned the logistics of timing home sales with new hiring cycles and the temporary loss of tax revenue, the presenters argued that providing stable homeownership opportunities for the workforce is essential for community retention and long-term economic health.

One primary concern centered on the geographic eligibility of buyers. Commissioners were worried that without strict controls, the homes would be purchased by people moving from neighboring cities like Bend, Redmond, or Madras rather than serving the local Prineville workforce. They questioned whether a "preference point" system for local employees would be legally defensible or if the county would face litigation or discrimination claims from out-of-area applicants. There was a specific worry that the larger populations in nearby cities would create a lopsided demand that could overshadow local needs.

Related to this was a concern regarding timing and recruitment. The board noted that the county, hospital, and school district do not hire in large enough "waves" to match the rapid build-out of 108 homes. They expressed that it would be very difficult to synchronize the moment a home hits the market with the moment a new essential worker is hired, potentially leading to a scenario where the homes are sold to the public simply because no local public employee was ready to buy at that exact time.

From a financial and tax perspective, the board closely examined the 10-year tax abatement. While the fire department's revenue is protected, the commissioners noted that the county, the museum, and the parks and recreation district would see no tax benefit from these 108 homes for a decade. They compared this to the large-scale abatements given to data centers, noting that while those data centers eventually bring in significant revenue and enterprise zone payments, this housing project represents another layer of "forgone" tax revenue that the county must balance against its current service demands.

Finally, there was a brief discussion regarding property maintenance and community standards. A commissioner specifically asked how the project would be "vetted" and maintained to ensure it remains a high-quality neighborhood. This led to questions about the use of HOAs and CC&Rs to prevent the area from falling into disrepair or having "Trans Ams up on blocks," ensuring that the middle-income designation does not result in a lower standard of living for the surrounding community.

In conclusion, the Board of Commissioners tasked Eric and Jason with several critical follow-up actions before the project can move forward, primarily focusing on local control and administrative feasibility. The presenters must provide a clear legal framework for a "preference point" system that prioritizes Crook County residents and public employees, ensuring that such a policy is defensible against potential discrimination claims from out-of-area applicants. Additionally, the Board requires a detailed administrative plan for managing home sales and income verification—likely through NeighborImpact—to solve the "timing" issue of matching home availability with

local recruitment cycles for teachers and law enforcement. Furthermore, Eric and Jason must coordinate with the County Assessor to map out the exact mechanics of the 10-year tax diversion, ensuring the Fire District's revenue is strictly protected and that the County's legal counsel has reviewed all state-provided sample ordinances and intergovernmental agreements to confirm that the County bears no financial liability for the underlying loan.

3. Landfill Outbound Scale Replacement

Requester:

Jacquie Davis, Landfill Director

Details: Landfill Director Jacquie Davis attended the Work Session to present a request to replace the outbound (southbound) scale at the landfill, noting the current scale is more than 20 years old and showing structural wear, including separation and lifting of the steel decking. The department had budgeted \$200,000 for a potential scale replacement in the current fiscal year. Three companies evaluated the scale and recommended full replacement rather than re-decking due to the age and condition of the components. Two bids were received: one from Unitec for a 100,000-pound capacity scale and another from Scales Northwest for a 120,000-pound capacity scale with thicker decking at a slightly lower cost of just over \$100,000. Jacquie recommended purchasing the scale from Scales Northwest, which also currently provides maintenance services for the landfill scales. She noted the existing scale approaches can be reused, reducing costs, and that the scale could potentially be expanded in the future when the transfer station area is redesigned. The item will be placed on the consent agenda for the March 18th regular session.

4. Agreement for Operation and Management of the COCC/Crook County Open Campus Building

Requester:

Suzie Kristensen, Prineville COCC Campus Director

Presenter(s):

Will Van Vactor, County Manager

Details: County Manager Will Van Vactor and Commissioner Crawford attended the Work Session to present a proposed amendment to the agreement between Crook County and COCC for the operation and management of the Crook County Open Campus building. The amendment would consolidate the existing three reserve accounts—building maintenance, IT equipment, and furnishings—into a single reserve fund managed by the county. The reserve fund would support building maintenance, furnishings, and IT-related expenses, with expenditures requiring written approval from both parties. The amendment also outlines scheduled annual contributions from both COCC and the county, beginning at \$70,000 each in fiscal year 2026–27 and increasing to \$100,000 each by fiscal year 2029–30, with a maximum reserve balance of \$1 million. Discussion included the purpose of maintaining reserve funds for long-

term building and technology upgrades, the current estimated balance of approximately \$200,000–\$250,000, and upcoming IT infrastructure improvements. County contributions would come from lottery funds designated for economic development. The item will be placed on the consent agenda for the March 18th regular session.

5. School Based Health Center Agreement with Mosaic Community Health & Crook County School District

Requester:

Katie Plumb, Health & Human Service Director

Details: Health and Human Services Director Katie Plumb attended the Work Session to present a revised multi-party agreement for the School-Based Health Center. The updated agreement consolidates multiple existing agreements into a single document to streamline amendments and increase transparency among the County, Oregon Health Authority, Mosaic, and other partners. The agreement establishes programmatic and fiscal arrangements for the remainder of the current fiscal year. Katie noted that Mosaic has been providing services since January without a formal contract in place, and approval of the agreement would allow reimbursement for those services. She also explained that minor language adjustments related to campus safety may be requested by the school district but would not affect the funding amounts. Future amendments are anticipated before July 1 to address changes in state funding and potential programmatic updates at the state level. The School-Based Health Center is located behind Crook County High School, and the County maintains oversight through regular partner meetings and coordination with school staff. Commissioners discussed oversight and facility details and indicated support for moving forward with the agreement.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to approve the school-based health center multi-party agreement as presented. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

6. EV Bookmobile Grant

Requester:

Kim Bales, Librarian Team Lead

Presenter(s):

Kim Bales, Librarian Team Lead
Will Van Vactor, County Manager

Details: Librarian Team Lead Kim Bales requested direction from the Board regarding a previously awarded grant for an electric bookmobile. The library had been awarded approximately \$650,000 through a state grant, along with up to \$78,000 from Pacific Power to support the project. Kim outlined several operational and financial concerns with moving forward, including limited driving range for rural routes such as Paulina

and Brothers, potential impacts of weather and terrain on battery performance, charging infrastructure requirements, insurance and maintenance considerations, and estimated annual operating costs of \$32,000–\$50,000. She also noted that the current outreach van is effectively providing library services to rural areas and within the community. Additional concerns included the requirement to destroy the existing bookmobile and the need for the county to front project costs prior to reimbursement. After discussion, commissioners indicated there was no interest in proceeding with the project at this time and directed staff to notify the grant partners that the county would not move forward with the electric bookmobile grant.

7. Review of Core Services: Fairgrounds, Bowman Museum, and Weed Control

Requester:

Will Van Vactor, County Manager

Presenter(s):

Will Van Vactor, County Manager

Casey Daly, Fairgrounds Manager

Details: Fairgrounds Manager Casey Daly presented the Fairgrounds core services overview as part of the county’s ongoing review of departmental core service descriptions. Casey explained that the fairgrounds operates as a multifaceted community hub serving a wide range of purposes. Core functions include hosting the annual Crook County Fair, supporting agricultural education in partnership with the Extension Office, and providing facilities for community events, recreational activities, and equine use. The fairgrounds are utilized regularly for horse training, races, and other equestrian activities, as well as public gatherings and cultural events.

Casey also highlighted the fairgrounds’ role in emergency preparedness and response, including serving as a shelter location during wildfires, a staging area for emergency responders, a site for livestock and pet evacuation, and a potential overflow medical facility if needed by the hospital. The facility also supports community services such as public health outreach and provides public internet access.

The fairgrounds maintains partnerships with multiple community organizations and agencies, including the Extension Office, City of Prineville, Crook County School District, St. Charles Health System, and others. Casey noted recent success in securing grant funding for facility improvements, including upgrades to the jockey room and potential expansion of the rodeo arena. Commissioners thanked Casey for the presentation and commended the fairgrounds’ role in serving the community.

County Manager Will Van Vactor presented the core service descriptions for the Bowman Museum and the County Weed Control program as part of the county’s ongoing review of departmental core services. The Bowman Museum’s mission is to collect, preserve, and share the history of Crook County through exhibits, research, and educational programs that promote appreciation of the region’s heritage. Key service areas include collections management and preservation of artifacts and

records; providing public access to archives and research services; education and community engagement through exhibits, lectures, school programs, and events; operational and administrative support to maintain sustainable funding and safe facilities; and supporting tourism and economic development by providing historical interpretation and visitor information. Will also noted efforts to enhance the Ranchers Memorial and increase public engagement with that area of the museum.

Will then provided an overview of the County Weed Control program, which focuses on identifying and managing invasive species to protect agricultural land, natural resources, and water quality. Core services include implementing noxious weed control programs in coordination with agencies such as the Forest Service and BLM; education and outreach to landowners and the public; regulatory enforcement and site inspections to ensure compliance with state weed laws; management of grants and collaborative projects; and program administration to maintain effective operations and financial accountability. Commissioners acknowledged the value of the program and staff dedication to addressing invasive weed issues throughout the county.

Manager Report

None

Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Hermreck reported that feedback speed signs will be placed at Weibel's Corner and on the hill coming out of Redmond from March 20th through March 30th. She also noted that law enforcement will be monitoring the area during that time to encourage drivers to slow down and improve safety.

Commissioner Crawford provided an update on efforts to secure access through the Bureau of Land Management for Juniper Canyon Road. He reported that the county continues to receive letters of support from several subdivisions in the Juniper Canyon area. Additional meetings are scheduled with local groups to gather further support, and coordination is ongoing with partners in Washington, D.C. to advance the process. Commissioner Crawford noted that once the remaining letters are collected, the project should be able to move forward more efficiently.

Commissioner Barney mentioned to Assessor Jon Soliz that he had missed an earlier discussion. He was advised to review the meeting minutes to catch up on the topics covered. Commissioners also mentioned a recently passed 2024 item that is still new to most counties and under discussion, noting that Tillamook County may currently be in negotiations related to it. Jon was encouraged to review the information and share his thoughts as more details become available. Jon asked when the meeting video would be available. Breyanna noted that videos are typically posted quickly and credited Alex Solterbeck for helping ensure timely posting. Commissioners also expressed appreciation for Breyanna's efforts to keep meeting minutes current, noting that in the past, minutes had been several months behind, and emphasizing how

valuable it is to now have them completed promptly.

Executive Session

8. None scheduled.

MOTION: Susan Hermreck moved to Adjourn. Brian Barney seconded. No discussion. Seth Crawford votes Aye, Susan Hermreck votes Aye, Brian Barney votes Aye. Motion Passed 3-0.

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was **adjourned at 10:06 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Breyanna Cupp, Executive Assistant